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ADDRESS

DELIVERED ON

Columbus Day, October 21, 1892,

AT THE

Library and Museum Building
of the University of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia,

BY

DANIEL G. BRINTON, A.M., M.D., LL.D.,

PROFESSOR OF AMERICAN ARCHÆOLOGY AND LINGUISTICS
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF WASHINGTON D. C.

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MR. PROVOST, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :—

In this epochal year, on this epochal day, we celebrate an event unparalleled in the annals of the race. That event completed the knowledge of the Old, by discovery of a New World ; it dispersed the darkness of dogmatic philosophy by the clear light of investigation and exploration ; it revealed to man the fullness of his own nature by making him acquainted for the first time with all the varieties of his own species.

Others will tell you the thrilling and pathetic tale of the greatness of that great and still misunderstood and calumniated man, who went forth to search the lonely seas, derided by the learned, flouted by the ignorant, but full of infinite courage and unswerving faith, fixed in purpose “ to sail beyond the sunset and the baths of all the western stars,” until he should reach the lands unknown and shores untrodden which his prophetic soul discerned.

Let others tell of his reward, of the darkened cell where he sat with manacled limbs, of the insults heaped upon his children, of his neglected age, and of the anxieties that hovered around his dying couch. Of these, I say, let others speak,—those capable of sympathizing with a grand nature battered and broken by the storms of fate and the keener blasts of ingratitude and jealousy.

I would call your attention to those strange millions who, through the strong endeavor of this famed commander, were brought into relation with the rest of their kind,—isolated, unique example of a race of our common species, cut off time out of mind from all others, but preserving through those thousands of years the unalterable imprint of Humanity. We know not whence they came, nor when. Far back in those gloomy years when the ice sheet covered the continent almost to the spot where now we stand, there seem to have been some men in this land battling with the elements for a hard subsistence. Many believe that their imperfect weapons, mere bits of broken stone, may yet be found in the gravels and moraines of the ancient glaciers. Perhaps from these descended that race which, with a surprising uniformity of physical and mental traits, extended, at the time of the discovery, from the shores of the Arctic Sea on the north to the bleak rocks of Cape Horn on the south. Wherever you find its representatives, you see the same peculiar hair, color, eyes, and other physical signs of racial unity; and wherever you trace their history, you find the same forms of religious and social life, the same lines of culture-development, and that same ineradicable love of liberty which seems to be inhaled with the air of this New World, and to become a part of the nature of men of whatever race who settle upon its soil, an inspiration and a faculty divine, ever urging them to wider horizons and a higher evolution.

Yet alongside of all these differences, sundering

them sharply from all other men whatsoever, we find such staggering similarities of thought, of story, of industrial product, that many a learned man to-day will tell you that they can be explained only by the theory that explorers earlier than Columbus, navigators antedating the Norwegian mariners, had not merely touched the coasts, but had penetrated deep into the American continent, carrying with them the arts and the philosophies, the religions and the governments, of the Old World. They will point out to you, as did the learned Humboldt, that the calendar of the Aztecs is too close to that of the Thibetans to suppose it could have come from any other source ; or, as has been often advocated by names less known to fame, that the signs of early Christian influence, the marks of Buddhistic dogmas, the words of Aryan languages, the alphabet of Chinese scribes, the traces of Phenician culture, the fragments of Welsh dialects, the proofs of Japanese intercourse, are all too clear to permit of a doubt, but that from these sources the American Indian owed whatever of civilization he could boast of.

The learned writers who have filled portly volumes in marshaling such evidence have forgotten one fact,—that, first of all, the native American was a *man*, a man as we are men, with the same faculties and aspirations, with like aims and ambitions, working as our ancestors worked, endeavoring to carry out similar plans with very similar means, fighting the same foes, seeking the same allies, and consequently arriving at the same or similar results. These

writers have thus lost to view the greatest lesson of all, that man, everywhere and at all times, separated by trackless seas, shut up apart ever since glacial ice froze the continents, dreaming of none others than he sees around him and influenced by none, develops in accordance with the laws of a common nature, proves himself kith and kin to all other men, vindicates everywhere the words of that wise man who, nigh nineteen hundred years ago, startled the subtle and conceited sophists of Athens by declaring,—“ God has made of one blood all nations of the earth.”

This is the lesson, and the last and highest lesson, which you will learn if you look around you in this building. What is the use of all these strange and diverse objects? Why bring together at much labor and expense these broken stones, these weapons of savages, these battered and nigh effaced inscriptions, these bones and hideous remnants of the buried dead,—why place them alongside of carved scimitars, of gay porcelain, of the dreams of beauty chiseled on glorious gems? What means this fantastic conglomeration of disparate material?

I will tell you. Every object you see in these cases, every fragment, every bit of dirty stone as well as every gem, every torn scrap of mummy cloth as well as every gaudy vase from the famed potteries of the Orient, is a star—a star, shining through the night of time, illumining to our view the path,—the long, the blind, the dreary, often the bloody path,—that man

trod to reach these classic grounds and breathe this peaceful air which are around us here to-day.

Is it not worth while to learn the paths our fathers trod, to hear of their struggles, to sympathize in their defeats, to share great joy at their victories? Indeed it is. These fragments around us tell of contests and crises which no history records; they testify of heroes greater than Agamemnon, of whom no Homer has sung; they hint of tribes and nations who fought and fell, and of whom not even the name is inscribed on any tomb, but who marched breast forward, never doubting right would triumph and their deeds bear fruit in ages yet unborn. They were right; and the lesson of this miscellaneous mass, of this farrago of stuff and lumber, of worn-out scraps and shards of pots and pans, if you will read it aright, is that in the endless chain of history no link is useless, that from the dark days when man, a naked savage, struggled with weak powers against the elemental and mighty forces of nature, up to to-day, when he has made them his obedient servants, there are everywhere marks of a master hand, guiding his steps in the darkness, letting no life wholly go to waste, building every fragment into an edifice which shall become a temple, pursuing through all devious ways the design of some unseen Designer, ever blending, guiding, developing, toward some future end which we can dimly descry but dare not define.

This is the truth,—the elder truth, the sacred truth, —which this Museum teaches, which is the object of its construction, which it seeks by its thousands of

evidences to corroborate and to disseminate. It is an earnest and a living truth, which it behooves you to take home and live intimately with ; for remember this, that all you have in the present, all you enjoy, all you can offer those you love, is the product and the harvest of the past, of those ages of accumulating knowledge and skill you see here represented ; and remember this still more, that we are to future generations what these ancient people were to us, and that as we accept and delight in the extension of knowledge, as we cherish and honor the past and its lessons, as we love to gather the proofs of the noble deeds of our fathers, so we shall transmit to our children and our children's children, unto untold generations, the aspirations that are ennobling and the passions that are heroic.

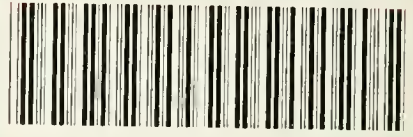






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